A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF PORT HARCOURT-BASED RADIO STATIONS' NEWS FRAMES ON RIVERS STATE GOVERNMENT'S URBAN RENEWAL PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

*The power of narratives to shape public policy is supported in a variety of academic literature. In the mass media, the angles to these narratives are called frames. By framing issues in specific ways, an entity can identify underlying patterns and shape public opinion in a certain direction. Using four research objectives as a template, this study analysed Port Harcourt radio news frames (*Nigeria Info 92.3 FM *and* Rhythm 93.7 FM*) on the Rivers State government's Urban Renewal Programme. While the theoretical foundation of the study hinged on agenda setting, gatekeeping, and framing theories, the study relied on secondary data from the news bulletins of the selected radio stations. The population of the study consisted of 255 news items, which also served as the sample size, following the census sampling technique. The findings of the study revealed that though* Nigeria Info 92.3FM *covered the programme more than* Rhythm 93.7 FM, *a significant percentage of the time (114 times, or 52.5%), the programme was framed positively in the bulletins of the two radio stations, using two major frames, "development" and "politics," and given prominence (49.8% of headlines and 80% of story length, measuring 16 seconds and above). In addition to the above, the quality of coverage was significantly high (72.1%), ranging from the mode of coverage to varying aspects of the programme reported. The study recommended that privately owned radio stations should do more coverage of government policies and programmes beyond the news platform and, at the same time, frame their stories in such a way to offer interpretation and context to the citizenry while holding the government and policy actors accountable.*

KEYWORDS: *News Frames, Urban Renewal, Framing Theory, Rivers State Government, Governor Wike, News Slant.*

INTRODUCTION

Urban Renewal is an economic development tool used by local governments to economically revitalise areas of "blight" through public investments that stimulate private development. Campbell (2019) defines urban renewal as a relatively comprehensive community redevelopment programme through which a particular city seeks to refashion and rebuild the physical structures of a particular segment of the city in order to enable it cope with many problems confronting it.Urban renewal is a programme of land redevelopment often used to address urban decay in cities. It involves the clearing out of blighted areas in inner cities to clear out slums and create

opportunities for higher class housing, businesses, and more. A primary purpose of urban renewal is to restore economic viability to a given area by attracting external private and public investment and by encouraging business start-ups and survival (Alonge &Wadinga, 2020; UNDP, 2020; Olaoluwa, 2018; Njoku &Okoro, 2014). This renewal process involves a wide range of activities which may include demolishing or tearing down old or run-down buildings, constructing new, up-to-date housing, or adding new urban amenities like dual carriage waysand overhead bridges.

At the beginning, the term was used to connote the correction of urban decay as well as slum clearance and the rescuing of both the fabrics and functions of the Central Business District of cities (CBD). Generally, urban renewal involves the renewal of the decayed parts of an urban centre on behalf of, and with the tacit co-operation of the people who live and work there. It is the totality of all public and private actions which are embarked upon to give the urban area the required face-lift or rehabilitation (World Bank, 2020). It is also a deliberate effort to change the urban environment through planning and large scale adjustment of the existing city areas to present and future requirements of urban living and work. Itsaim is the overall prevention of the spread of slums and blight through the rehabilitation and conservation of deteriorated areas.

Over the years in Nigeria,the federal, states as well aslocal governments have made concerted efforts to improve the quality of life (QOL) of the residents of cities and metropolitan centres through urban renewal programmes. The provision of social services, massive provision of urban infrastructure, improvement of the aesthetic level of the environment, provision of recreational facilities, health and related programmes, coupled with the heightening of the awareness of self-actualization outfits, have pre-eminently positive implications in bolstering and bettering the quality of life of urban dwellers. Nigeria, at present, is a typical theatre of urban transformation (Olukoya, 2012). However, due to elitist orientation of policies, the poor bearthe brunt of development and their welfare short-changed at the altar of political and economic opportunism. With Nigeria'sdemocratic experiment, it is envisaged that since the poor constitute the majority of the democratic social capital and expectedly the pillar of governance, their interest should count first in the planning and execution of development programmes. In Nigeria, most attempts at bringing about city and urban renewal and re-planning entails untold hardship for the people as houses are demolished, businesses (mostly of the poor people) terminated or disrupted and families made homeless. Neither compensation nor all-embracing resettlement alternatives are made available to the inhabitants before bulldozers move in to destroy their houses and businesses (Michael, Olamiju&Popoola, 2017; Apolola, 2016; Chigbu, 2012).

At inception, theurban renewal programmeof Governor Nyesom Wike's administration in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, was conceived to provide a social boost to the city. The construction of overhead bridges (flyovers) in different areas in Port Harcourt was part of the urban renewal programme. Such overhead bridges included those at: Rumuogba (1&2)flyovers, Rebisi flyover, Okoro-nu-Odo flyover, etc. Other projects by the administration included the Mother and Child Hospital, Construction of roads leading to Ogoni, Etche, etc.,as well as roads within the city and outskirts of Port Harcourt.

Evidently, experiences of past renewal programmes had brought about many positive consequences among which were better public health, well and better planned cities, good and aesthetically pleasing environments, solutions to traffic congestions, attraction of tourists and new business investors, reduction of travel times, reduced slum formations, reduced

disorderliness among others (World Bank, 2020). Regeneration or renewal programmes in city centres have also been documented to rebrand these cities by upgrading their identities. In some cases, renewal may result in urban sprawl when city infrastructure begins to include freeways and expressways (UNDESA, 2015). Urban renewal has been seen by proponents as an economic engine and a reform mechanism, and by critics as a mechanism for control. Though it may bring more wealth to communities, it may also edge out its pre-existing residents. Some redevelopment projects have been failures, for instance, the Rivers State monorail train project by former Governor Chibuike Amaechi, aimed at aidingurban transportation in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, was a failure.

The role of the media is to educate, inform, entertain, advertise and publicise,while radio in particular is the most effective way of delivering information in remote corners where having the right knowledge can mean the difference between a harvest and hunger, between feeling confident or humiliated, or even between life and death (Innocent, 2016). Consequent upon this therefore, radio becomes a significant factor in influencing and determining how the populace or citizens of a given geopolitical setting perceive, interpret and respond to government programmes including those related to urban renewal, hence this study. As a mass medium, radio has a significant influence on shaping how Rivers State residents perceive and respond to the Urban Renewal programme of the Governor NyesomEzenwo Wike administration in Rivers State. Hence, this study set out to measure how radio packaged their news on the urban renewal programme of the Rivers State government.

Statement of the Problem

Across the globe,people rely on the mass media for information on a several aspects of life, including infrastructural development. They also rely on the mass media to keep abreast of what political actors and governments are doing in their different countries. When citizens are well-informed, theyare armed to properly understand the policies of a given administration and to also make their personal inputs in the form of criticism. As it concerns this study, we believe that a lack of appropriate information and awareness on the urban renewal programmeas well as infrastructural development and the issues that surround them, could negatively influence how the citizens perceive and respond to the policies of the administration and this could in turn have a significant impact on the overall success of the government.

At present, Port Harcourt City,the capital of Rivers State, Nigeria, is a typical theatre of urban transformation. Across the city there are transformations and reconstructions indifferent places including flyovers or overhead bridges, roads, hospitals, etc. It is the duty of the media, specifically radio, to report these programmes to adequately create awareness and to inform the people of the development gainsin this urban renewal process. In this direction, two foremost privately-owned radio stations in Port Harcourt - *Rhythm 93.7 FM* and *Nigeria Info 92.3 FM*- have been at the forefront of daily reporting news and information on Rivers State government's urban renewal programme.As privately-owned radio stations, radio listeners in the city, specially the educated and upwardly mobile segment (who double as opinion leaders in different spheres), prefer these two radio stations as they believe their reports are not tainted by government influence. This being the case, it follows that the nature of such reports has a cascading effect on how the programme is perceived by the ordinary citizen of the state.

The above notwithstanding, there are no empirical studies on the depth, nature and slant of the radio news on the urban renewal programme on-going in Port Harcourt. In fact, most studies in

this direction only focus on analysis on redevelopment, rehabilitationand code enforcement. The problem of this study therefore is, how do Port Harcourt-based radio stations frame Rivers State government's Urban Renewal Programme in their news bulletins?

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aimof the study is to content-analyse Port Harcourt radio stations' news frames on Wike's urban renewal programme. The specific objectives are to:

1. Ascertain the frequency of appearance of Rivers State government'surban renewal programme in the news bulletins ofRhythm 93.7 FM and *Nigeria Info 92.3FM*between March andAugust, 2022

2. Determine the prominence given to Rivers State government'surban renewal programme on *Rhythm 93.7 FM* and *Nigeria Info 92.3FM* news bulletinsbetween March and August, 2022

3. Ascertain the quality of coverage of Rivers State government'surban renewal programme on *Rhythm 93.7 FM* and *Nigeria Info 92.3FM* news bulletinsbetween March and August, 2022

4. Determine the slant and frames given to Rivers State government's urban renewal programme on*Rhythm 93.7 FM* and *Nigeria Info 92.3FM*news bulletins between March and August, 2022

Theoretical Framework

Framing Theory

The framing theory was propounded by Erving Goffman in 1974 in his book, *Framing analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. In its simplest form, framing is used to explain how the mass media promote a particular definition of an issue through selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration (Devereux, 2013). Müller (2017) also defines framing as "Selecting perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text while Crow & Lawlor (2016) had earlier said it is "The central organising idea for content that supplies context and suggests what the issue is, using selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration.

The basis of the framing theory is that the media focus attention on certain events and then place them within a field of meaning. The framing process includes factors such as the way a message is delivered, noticing angles addressed, confidence of the speaker, word choice, tone of voiceand overall delivery of the message,which all have important effects on how the message is interpreted. Frames are therefore abstractions that work to organise or structure message meaning(Innocent, 2017). One key use of frames occurs in news selection and presentation by the mass media. Thisselection and presentation is thought to influence the perception of the news by the audience, so in this way, it could be construed as a form of second level agenda-setting – media not only tell the audience what to think about (agenda-setting), but also how to think about it (framing). In sum, framing is a media effects theory largely used to analyse how the mass media filterand slant information and, thus, influence the public's perception and reaction to such information (De Vreese, 2007). In media studies, the framing theory offers critical frameworks to examine messages, observe patterns and identify themes, investigate how frames are constructed and analyse the underlying meanings of these frames.

Agenda Setting Theory

The agenda setting theory was formally developed by Max McCombs and Donald Shaw in a study on the 1972. The theory discusses the role the media play in placing issues on public agenda. According to the agenda-setting hypothesis, the media influence public opinion by emphasising certain issues over others. The amount of media attention, or the media salience, devoted to certain issues influences the degree of public concern for these issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972 as cited in Defleur (2010). The roots of this approach according to Defleur (2010), can be found in Lippman's (1922) argument that the world around us is too complicated and out of reach, and that consequently, we must rely on the media to understand it.

The agenda-setting theory began with an explanation of how the mass media exercise influence on changingpatterns of political behaviour during electionsin the United States of America's presidential election of 1968. One of the key aspects of agenda-setting theory is the ability of the media to highlight certain topics or aspects of issues and put them into the stream of public discourse. By calling attention to some issues over others, the news media form the public's opinion about the most important issues. This theoryposits that the mass media possess the ability to set the public agenda especially in matters of opinions or attitude. With such influence, the media audiences tend to form their own opinion or focus on those issues that are considered as worthy of inclusion on their mental agendas (Bohensky and Leitch, 2014). Specifically, Carmin *et al.* (2015)opines that the process of agenda setting occurs via: (1) The quantity or frequency of reporting; (2) Prominence given to the reports – through headline display, pictures and layout in newspapers, magazines, film, graphics, or timing on radio and television. (3) The degree of conflict generated in the reports; and (4) Cumulative media-specific effects overtime.

Port Harcourt City, Rivers State

Port Harcourt is the capital city of Rivers State. It is the fifth-largest city in Nigeria after Lagos, Kano, Ibadan and Benin City and lies along the Bonny River, located in the Niger Delta. As of 2016, the Port Harcourt urban area had an estimated population of 1,865,000 inhabitants, up from 1,382,592 as of 2006. The urban area (Port Harcourt metropolis) is made up of the Port Harcourt City Local government area and partsof Obio-Akpor and Eleme (Chinedu, 2011).

The area that became Port Harcourt in 1912 was before that time, part of fishing settlements (fishing ports) also called Borikiri in the Okrika language and the farmlands of the Diobu village group of the Ikwerre ethnic nationality. The colonial administration of Nigeria created the port to export coal from the collieries of Enugu located 243 kilometres (151 miles) north of Port Harcourt, to which it was linked by a railway called the Eastern Line, also built by the British(Chinedu, 2011).

Port Harcourt is a major industrial centre as it has a large number of multinational firms as well as other industrial concerns, particularly business related to the petroleum industry. It is the chief oil-refining city in Nigeria and has two main oil refineries located at Eleme(Ogbonna, Amangabara&Ekere, 2007). The Trans-Amadi Industrial Estate, 4 miles (6km) is a 2,500-acre (1,000-hectare) site where tyres, aluminum products, glass bottles and paper, are manufactured. The town also manufactures steel structural products, corrugated tin, paints, plastics, enamelware, wood and metal furniture, cement, concrete products, and several other goods. Rivers State is one of the wealthiest states in Nigeria in terms of gross domestic product and foreign exchange revenue from the oil industry, crude oil being its principal export earner (Ogbonna, Amangabara&Ekere, 2007).

The residents of Port Harcourt comprise of people from the different local government areas of Rivers State as well as those from other states and countries. The different Local Government Areas have different languages butthe English Language and Pidgin are the dominant languages of communication among the diverse residents of the city. The occupation of residents of Port Harcourt varies as the people work as teachers, traders, private businessmen, civil servants, company workers, craftsmen, fishing, etc. Port Harcourt is the site of boatbuilding and fishing industries and has fish-freezing facilities (Chinedu, 2011).The Rivers State Ministry of Urban Development is entrusted with the task of reviewing and preparing physical development, urban renewal and transportation plans. The ministry is also in charge of urban reorientation and enforcement, regional rural planning, land provision and the approval of building plans.

2.1.2 *Rhythm 93.7FM* and *Nigeria Info 92.3FM*

Rhythm 93.7 FM is a commercial radio station located in the Old GRA neighbourhood of Port Harcourt. It is owned bythe *Silverbird* Group, a Nigerian multinational real estate, mass media and entertainment company, with headquarters in Lagos, Nigeria. The *Silverbird* Communications comprises of *Rhythm 93.7 FM* and *Silverbird Television*. Rhythm 93.7 FM, Lagos, was established in 1997 while *Silverbird Television* commenced transmission in 2003. In 2002, Rhythm 93.7 FM, Port Harcourt, was established (Amadi &Sowoolu, 2010), and branded as a "less talk, more music"radio. The station broadcasts on an urban contemporary radio format;its news appeals to the educated segment while its music component attracts youths, thereby making it the preferred choice of most listeners in the city.

Nigeria Info 92.3 FM is a media arm of outlet of AIMS Group in Nigeria owned by Amin Ibrahim Moussalli, a Lebanese business man based in Nigeria. In addition to *Nigeria Info 92.3 FM,* the group also operates*Wazobia FM*and *Cool FM*(Innocent and Okezie, 2022)and these stations are among the leading radio stations in Nigeriawith a reach of over 15 million listeners across Rivers state and southern Nigeria (Innocent and Okezie, 2022). *Nigeria Info FM* which brands itself as the 'number one talk radio brand in Nigeria' began its broadcast on November 30, 2012 in Abuja.Specifically,*Nigeria Info*92.3 FM, which refers to itself as the News, Talk and Sports radio station broadcasts local and international news with a blend of talk and sports shows, while addressing current affairs and topical issues in Nigeria.The station has different flagship news programmes such as *Morning Crossfire, Hard Facts, Midday Dialogue, Evening Drive, Extra Time* (sports team),etc.,and maintains social media presence on *Facebook, Instagram, Youtube*and *Twitter,*with huge followership.

Urban Renewal in Nigeria

Urban renewal can be said to be the process where an urban neighbourhood or area is improved, rehabilitated or redeveloped.It is a common phrase among urban planners, land use experts and politicians whose dreams and aspiration are usually targeted at seeing that the scarce land resource of an urban area is maximally utilised (Alonge, &Wadinga, 2020).An urban area generally grows in all facets of its features over timeand accompanying this growth is the deterioration or degeneration of basic amenities and infrastructure and this development triggers off the need for improvement, rehabilitation, redevelopment or renewal of the amenities and infrastructure to meet the yearning socio-political and economic demands, tastes and fashion and changing culture of the people.

The origin of urban renewal programmes can be traced to the great depressions of the 1930s (Olaoluwa, 2018)where there was obvious dissatisfaction with the housing conditions in Britain. During this period, unprecedented skyscrapers were built in most British/English cities to replace obsolete residential structures. However,UNDP (2020) tracesthe origin of urban renewal programmes to the United States of America's 1937 Housing Act which made provision for slum clearance and the replacement of dilapidated houses with subsidized public housing which have modern facilities. In Nigeria, the first attempt at urban renewal was in Lagos in 1955 as an aftermath of the outbreak of cholera and bubonic plague in 1929 (Olaoluwa, 2018). Other Nigerian towns and cities such as Ibadan, Calabar, Makurdi and soon followed. The World Bank Community-based urban development programme has also executed a number of slum up-grading programmes/schemes in states such as Bauchi, Jigawa, Ondo, Ebonyi and Akwa Ibom. According to Michael, Olamiju&Popoola (2017), this is in addition to the National Urban Renewal Programme ongoing in three Nigerian cities,Badiya(Lagos State), Aba (Abia State) and Kurna Asabe (Kano State).

Historically, urban and social segregation policy in Nigeria dates back to the colonial dispensation- Colonial Europe Reservations Policy of 1902, the Township Ordinance of 1917, the Nigerian Town and Country Planning Ordinance of 1946, and was later followed by the National Housing of 1972, the National Housing Policy of 1991 and the Millennium Development Goals adopted by Nigeria (Njoku & Okoro, 2014). At independence, cities that served as seat of administration across different levels of government, necessarily, had to witness some expansion as a hallmark of governance. Three factors have contributed to urban renewal in Nigeria. They are creation of new sets of states through territorial disaggregation, election of new parties and set of elites into government, and finally,the need to embark on major environmental and infrastructural development, such as road, rail construction, drainage, airportand markets(UNDESA, 2015).However, as we observed earlier, very often, these developments bring along with them some negative consequencessuch as loss of homes by the poor (who are usually neither compensated nor rehabilitated), loss of jobs, inconveniences associated with increased distance between the new found home and the place of work, increased cost of transportation and travelling time for school children, displacement of menial workers, loss of socioeconomic ties by the poor, outright loss of livelihood by some of the 'most poor' families(Olaoluwa, 2018). Apart from when new cities are created as an aspect of modernisation and 'national front office' to disguise national poverty, such as Nigeria experienced in the mid-70s with FESTAC 77, and movement of the Federal Capital to Abuja in the early 90s, most other attempts at bringing about city and urban renewal and re-planning entails untold hardship for the poor(Olukoya, 2012).One case in point was the displacement of people at Maroko and Lekki in Lagos in 1992. Agreed these lands might have been acquired by government, but most inhabitants of Maroko and Lekki still had to acquire these lands from the traditional land owners, having paid substantial amounts for the land(Michael, Olamiju&Popoola, 2017).

Urbanisation in a Developing Economy

The bursting rate of urbanisation has been one of the major issues/challenges which many national and local government authorities in developing nations/economies have to grapple with. Developing countries face greater urbanisation challenges than developed countries as the latter urbanised at a comparatively leisure pace unlike the former (Dimuna and Omatsone, 2010). Urbanisation does not only cause transformation of townsand cities, but also depopulates rural settings at the same time through rural-urban migration of the economically active

population(Alonge, &Wadinga, 2020). Urbanisation all over the globe manifests not only in terms of extension of the urban environment in territorial coverage but also in population. During the 1999 World Habitat Day, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) noted that Africa and other developing countries would be the most challenged in urban revolution process,noting that the fastest population growth would take place in Africaand lead to over-population, congestion, pollution, inadequate housing/shelter, squalour underdevelopment, and increasing incidence of poverty and crime (Jiboye, 2011). The picture is grim for Nigeriawith a population growth rate of 5.8 per cent and urban population of 62.66 million people (i.e. about 43 percent of the national population). This urban population has been projected to be more than 60 percent of the national figure by 2025 (UNDP (2020). One can only imagine the scenario by 2025 when already Nigerian urban centres are characterized by a degrading state of the physical environment(Jiboye, 2011).

Radio Broadcasting

Advances in technology have given people more ways to access an increasing amount of information;however, radio still plays a vital role in today's world. Radio is more than just announcers, news and songs;it is about companionship and the emotional connection with the listener (Lawrence, 2012). Radio broadcasts provide real-time information, and some that broadcast 24 hours a day, can provide the most recent updates to listeners. Radio has the ability to reach across borders and can become a valuable source of information where reliable news is scarce(Sugunadevi& Divya, 2018). Radio has proved its worth in times of emergency such as when access to the mobile network is down or phone lines are cut. Even when there is no electricity, most radio sets can be battery operated or have the ability to be handcranked (Sugunadevi& Divya, 2018). Radio is also a social medium, fostering participation and engagement, in people's own home languages. In the recent Covid-19 pandemic where social-distancing measures hindered physical interaction, individuals engaged in meaningful community participation by calling into radio stations to have their say, while also listening to fellow community members. This way, radio has the widest geographical reach and the greatest audiences compared with the Internet, television and newspapers. People can listen to radio anytime, anywhere(Lawrence, 2012). Despite the fact that radio broadcasting sometimes puts both journalists and the stations they work for at risk, they continue to exist because there is a listenership that values their news and information. Radio continues to be a widely used medium for reporting both local and international news (Innocent, 2022).

News Framing

Goffman (1974) as cited in Müller (2017) defines a frame as "the principles of organization which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them." This "schemata of interpretation" helps people to "locate, perceive, identify, and label" everyday events (p. 21). Journalists use frames (to) organize strips of the everyday world, a strip being an arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity (Adekola& Lamond,2018; Müller, 2017).

News is anything but a true reflection of reality(Owuamalam, 2017; Uwakwe,2010; Esterson, 2004) but rather a frame or window on reality that seeks to or can only reflect part of this reality.Frames are used to select as well as present news, and this selection is based on news valueswhich are general guidelines or criteria that determine how much prominence a media outlet gives a **news** story (Ndimele and Innocent, 2016; Uwakwe, 2010).Also known as news

criteria or news factors,news values explain why a story interests its audience and how editors and other journalists decide that one piece of information is news while another is not. According to Owen (2020), the eight typical news values are: impact, conflict, timeliness, unexpected, prominence, currency, proximity, human interest,oddity, and positivity (feel-good tabloid stories). News values and frames therefore mesh because the mere selection of a story as news confers a frame of 'importance' to such a story. However, theseframes can be influenced by several factors including ownership and ideology and these are subsequently transmitted in large doses to the audience who ultimately make the choice of how they perceive the issues in the news based on this influence. The import of this therefore is that the media are significant contributors to the formation of public opinion in society(Innocent, 2018; Nisbet 2009).

Materials and Methods

The design for the study was content analysisof 255 news bulletins of *Rhythm 93.7FM* and *Nigeria Info 92.3FM,* betweenMarch and August, 2022. The population of the study therefore is 255 (123 covered by *Rhythm 93.7 FM* and 132 covered by *Nigeria Info 92.3FM*). As a result of the study population, census sampling technique was adopted to select the study sample which is 255. The content categories were project type, public complaints, community issues, development and necessity reasons, politics and economy while the units of analysis were headlines, kickers, riders, leads, and body of the stories. The code sheet with an inter-coder reliability score of 1.0 (arrived at using Holsti's formula), was used to collect data which were in turn analysed using the Constant Comparative Technique (CCT) with 4-step process.

Results and Findings

Objective 1: Ascertain the frequency of appearance of Rivers State government'surban renewal programme in the news bulletin of *Rhythm 93.7 FM* and *Nigeria Info 92.3FM* between March and August 2022

In terms of frequency, Rivers State government's Urban Renewal Programme was reported more by *Nigeria Info 92.3FM* (132 times or 51.8%) while *Rhythm 93.7FM* covered it 123 times (48.2%).

Objective 2: Determine the prominence given to Rivers State government's urban renewal programme on *Rhythm 93.7 FM* and *Nigeria Info 92.3FM* news bulletins

Two indices were employed to measure prominence – position of stories on the programme in the news bulletins of the two radio stations, as well as the length of the stories on the programme (measured in seconds) in the news bulletins of the stations. The data generated (Table 1) showed that stories on the programme appeared as news headlines 49.8% of the time for the period of study. In terms of length, 103 items or 40.4% of news items on the programme on *Rhythm 93.7FM*were a minimum of 16 seconds and above while for *Nigeria Info 92.3FM*, the average length was (16 seconds and above for 104 items;40.8%).

TABLE 1:POSITION OF STORIES IN NEWS BULLETINS

Story type	Rhythm 93.7 FM	Nigeria Info 92.3FM	Total	Percentage
News headline	62	65	127	49.8
Other stories	36	37	73	28.6
News titbits	26	29	55	21.5

Total	**123**	**132**	**255**	**100**

Objective 3: Ascertain the quality of coverage of Rivers State government's urban renewal programme on *Rhythm 93.7 FM* and *Nigeria Info 92.3FM* news bulletins

This objective was measured using the following indices: news type on the urban renewal programme, selected topics on theprogrammecovered and other factors related to the programme as covered by the radio stations. For index 1, data (Table 2) showed that for the period of study, radio stories on the programmewere mainly straight news (72.1%).For index 2, the most reported topic on the urban renewal programme for the study period was 'award of contracts' (36.8%; Table 3) while for the third index, the two most 'other related factors' reported by the stations (Table 4) were project type (43.5%) and public reaction to the projects (30.5%).

TABLE 2: NEWS TYPE ON RIVERS STATE GOVERNMENT'SURBAN RENEWAL PROGRAMME

News category	Rhythm 93.7 FM	Nigeria Info 92.3FM	Total	Percentage
Straight news	91	93	184	72.1
Soft news	32	39	71	27.8
Total	**123**	**132**	**255**	**100**

TABLE 3: SELECTED REPORTED TOPICS ON RIVERS STATE GOVERNMENT'SURBAN RENEWAL PROGRAMME

Category	Rhythm 93.7 FM	Nigeria Info 92.3FM	Total	Percentage
Contract awards	45	49	94	36.8
Project flag-off	23	38	61	23.9
Project commissioning	16	25	41	16
Announcements	39	20	59	23.1
Total	**123**	**132**	**255**	**100**

TABLE 4: OTHER FACTORS ADDRESSED IN NEWS ON THE URBANRENEWAL PROGRAMME

Various issues	Rhythm 93.7 FM	Nigeria Info 92.3FM	Total	Percentage
Public reactions	43	35	78	30.5
Project type	48	63	111	43.5
Government reaction to public complaints	21	27	48	18.8
Community issues	11	7	18	7
Total	**123**	**132**	**255**	**100**

Objective 4: Determine the slant and frames given to Rivers State government's urban renewal programme on *Rhythm 93.7 FM* and *Nigeria Info 92.3FM* news bulletins

Slant was measured in terms of story direction. The data on this revealed that 73 items (*Nigeria Info, 92.3FM*) and 61 items (*Rhythm 93.7FM*) were positive in tone. That gave a total of 134 items or 52.5% of the sample. However, 104 stories (40.8%) were neutral, implying a seemingly detached stance from the radio concerning the programme. Only 6.7% (17 items) of the 255 stories were negative. A total of 13 different frames were found in the news items on the urban renewal programme (Table 5). The three most used frames were 'development' (16%), 'politics' (14.5%) as well as 'action' and 'economy' (12.1% each).

TABLE 5: FRAMES USED FOR URBAN RENEWAL PROGRAMMES ON RADIO NEWS BULLETINS

News frame	Rhythm 93.7 FM	Nigeria Info 92.3FM	Total	Percentage
Necessity frame	11	14	25	9.8
Development frame	19	22	41	16
Political frame	16	21	37	14.5
Challenge frame	5	2	7	2.7
Response frame	5	3	8	3.1
Emphasis frame	14	11	25	9.8
Action frame	17	14	31	12.1
Conflict frame	1	2	3	1.1
Attack frame	7	6	13	5
Economic frame	16	15	31	12.1
Health and safety frame	5	13	18	7
Public opinion frames	7	9	16	6.2
Total	**123**	**132**	**255**	**100**

Discussion of Findings

Objective 1: Ascertain the frequency of appearance of Rivers State government's urban renewal programme in the news bulletin of *Rhythm 93.7 FM* and *Nigeria Info 92.3FM* between March and August 2022

The study data indicated that the stations surveyed had a significantly high frequency of coverage for the urban renewal programme. However, though the radio stations analysed are both privately-owned, the data showed *Nigeria Info 92.3FM* had a marginally higher frequency of coverage of the programme in its news bulletins for the period of study. The high frequency of coverage is an indication that the nature and impact of the urban renewal programme of the state government made stories about it newsworthy. Media selection of such news on urban renewal typified the gatekeeping function of the media in which radio journalists considered news on the programme to hold significant value for residents of Port Harcourt. This finding echoes those of Defleur(2010) that the gatekeeping function of the media underlines their role in agenda setting which dovetails into influencing public opinion by shaping public agenda.Following this argument therefore, we can assume that the mass media in Nigeria give adequate attention to matters of public good. This finding is in consonance with those of Adekola&Lamond(2018) who had contended that in terms of environmental emergencies, such as flooding in Nigeria, the mass media provide adequate information and interpretation to aid public awareness and response to these emergencies. However, this assumption is at variance with those of Gever and

Ezeah (2020)that the Nigerian media did not provide adequate information on COVID-19 when it was first reported in China and when it finally got to Nigeria. Other studies (Okpara, 2022; Ebereuche, 2021) also recorded similar findings and therefore corroborate the above finding.

Objective 2: Determine the prominence given to Rivers State government's urban renewal programme on *Rhythm 93.7 FM* and *Nigeria Info 92.3FM* news bulletins

As noted earlier, two indices were employed to measure prominence – position of stories on the programme on the news bulletins of the two radio stations, as well as the length of the stories on the programme (measured in seconds). The data generated (Table 1) showed that stories on the programme appeared as news headlines 49.8% of the time for the period of study. In terms of length, 103 items or 40.4% of news items on the programme on Rhythm were a minimum of 16 seconds and above while for Nigeria Info, the average length was (16 seconds and above for 104 items (40.8%). Again, *Nigeria Info 92.3FM* gave more prominence to news on the programme than *Rhythm 93.7 FM*. This also applied to length of the stories in the bulletins. However, taken together, analysed data indicate that both stations gave adequate prominence to stories and issues relating to the urban renewal programme. 81.2% of the time, stories on the programme appeared as headlines in the news bulletins for the period of the study. This finding accords with those of Owen (2020) and Innocent (2022) that the importanceaccorded to news stories is measured by their appearance as major headlines in news bulletins. This finding is also significant because as Ifejika and Ayanda (2007) opine, media placement of news items in bulletins influence audienceperception of the importance those items.

Objective 3: Ascertain the quality of coverage of Rivers State government's urban renewal programme on *Rhythm 93.7 FM* and *Nigeria Info 92.3FM* news bulletins

Three benchmarks were used to measure quality of coverage. They are news type on the programme, selected topics on the programme covered as well as other factors related to the programme as reported by the radio stations. The findings indicate that the urban renewal programmewas given quality and in-depth coverage in the news bulletins of the radio stations surveyed. First, the stories on the programme appeared mostly as straight news (72.1%) in both *Nigeria Info 92.3FM*and *Rhythm 93.7 FM*. This is statistically significant because the straight news style accords status to a news item and ensures that opinion leaders would expose themselves to these news items. In addition to this, some human interest angles to the programme were presented as soft news on news and current affairs programmes of the stations. This mixed method approach ensured that the urban renewal programme was covered in such a way that all segments of the Rivers State audience encountered the reports and discussions on radio.

For selected topics on the programme covered, analysed data indicated quality coverage. This is because different aspects of the urban renewal programme were adequately reported in the news. Some examples of headlines include: 'Governor Wike *commissions* Okoro-nu-Odu flyover', 'Governor Wike *inaugurates* road projects in Tombia, Rivers State', 'Governor Wike promises to deliver *quality projects* in Rivers State, 'Wike *awards N27.6 billion contract* for the construction of the Trans-Kalabari and Saakpenwa-Bori-Kono road projects', 'Rivers State Government *approves contract* to build 6th flyover in Port Harcourt', etc. Other factors related to the urban renewal programme such as project type, public reactions to the programme, government response to public complaints as well as community-related issues were adequately reported in a factual, comprehensible, relevant manner. Those these findings agree with those of Nyong,

Adesina & Elasha (2007) and Ukonu, Akpan &Anorue (2012), they vary with those of Gever and Ezeah (2020) that in reporting critical social issues the mass media, as exemplified in their reports on the COVID-19 pandemic, do not provide reports that touched on the various angles and issues relating to the core issue being reported.

Objective 4: Determine the slant and frames given to Rivers State government'surban renewal programme on *Rhythm 93.7 FM* and *Nigeria Info 92.3FM* news bulletins

Analysed data indicated that despite not being government-owned, the two radio stations surveyed had slanted a significant number of their news items on the urban renewal programme towards positive and favourable tones. Such favourable tone is underlined by the use of words and phrases such as 'which will guarantee ...', '... to ease mobility', '... in the bid to promote good road network', etc. A consistent framing of the news in favour of the government for the period of study would seemingly indicatean editorial endorsement of the programme, a result of some form of inducement or fear of a backlash from the government (Innocent, 2018). In terms of the frames used in presenting news on the programme, 13 frames were used in all, with 'development' the most used (16%) and 'conflict'the least used at 1.1%. However, the most used theme, 'development' varied from the Rivers State Government's selling points for the programme, such as 'necessity''political achievement' 'action''economy' and 'public good'. However, by framing the urban renewal programme as development-oriented and downplaying the conflicts and complaints attached to it by a significant percentage of the citizenry, the radio stations surveyed showed a positive slant in their news bulletins towards the urban renewal programme.

The above findings here have left a question yet to be answered and that is, what specific reason among the three we identified informed the favourable stance of the radio stations we surveyed towards the Rivers State urban renewal programme? In the literature (Devitt & O'Neill, 2017; Udoakah, 2014), it is believed that when it comes to reporting the government, the privately-owned media (radio) are relatively more objective and non-partisan than the government-owned. So, using this as a background and going by the pedigree of the surveyed stations as fearless, factual and balanced in reportage (Eghosa, 2013; Nwagbara, 2010), we can safely conclude that the urban renewal programme enjoyed editorial endorsement by radio, strictly on merit. Again, this finding agrees with those of Odoemelam, Okorom and Okwudiogor (2016) that privately-owned broadcast media always endorse government programmes and policies if such are deemed and proven to be in the interest of the people.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the data analysed and consequent findings, we conclude that despite being privately owned and with a pedigree for combative and non-compromise journalism, *Nigeria Info 92.3FM* and *Rhythm 93.7 FM* adequately reported and framed the Rivers State government's Urban Renewal Programme ongoing in Port Harcourt City and Obio-Akpor Local Government Areas of the State, in their news bulletins for the period of study. It is recommended that privately-owned radio stations should do more coverage of government policies and programmes beyond the news platform and at the same time frame their stories in such a way to hold the government accountable to the citizenry.

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